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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL
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Fortieth session
Vienna, 2-13 June 1997

Working Methods of the Committee and its Subsidiary Bodies

Note by the Secretariat

At the thirty-ninth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held from 3 to 14 June 1996, the Committee entrusted its Chairman, with assistance of the other members of the bureau and the Secretariat, to undertake inter-sessional informal consultations among the members of the Committee with the aim of reaching consensus decisions before the next session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the modalities of establishing a new composition of bureaux keeping in view the principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation. The Committee further recommended that all proposals made by delegations and groups of delegations, including the need for agenda restructuring and an examination of the duration of the session, would be taken fully into account in the framework of those informal consultations.

In accordance with this mandate, the Chairman convened six meetings of inter-sessional informal consultations among Members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space between 24 July 1996 and 16 April 1997 in New York and Vienna. As a result, Members of the Committee agreed upon the following Chairman's package proposal on the composition of the Bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, agenda structures and duration of sessions.

CHAIRMAN'S PACKAGE PROPOSAL

A. Working Methods of the Committee and Its Subsidiary Bodies

Composition of the Bureaux

- Every aspect of the establishment of the bureaux should be agreed upon by consensus of the Committee.

- The bureaux will consist of the five current offices: Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee; Chairman of the Legal Subcommittee; and Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

- The five offices should rotate among the five regional groups, with one office being allocated to each of the regional groups: African Group, Asian Group, Eastern European Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group, and the Group of Western Europe and other States.

- Consultations should be held among the regional groups two sessions before the beginning of the next term to agree on the current officer(s) to be re-elected, if any, and to determine which group will be responsible for which office, taking into account the principle of rotation. This is generally in line with the practice of the General Assembly for electing officers for its main Committees.

- The qualifications for candidates to the offices of the bureaux should include: I) demonstration of interest in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies; ii) recognized experience and background relevant to the work of these bodies; and iii) commitment to fulfilling the tasks entrusted during the tenure.

- The term of each office should be three years; no regional group should hold the same office for more than two consecutive terms.

- When any officer cannot complete a term, the regional group holding the office concerned should nominate a candidate to be elected at the beginning of the session that immediately follows the termination of that officer's tenure; if such an election takes place in either of the Subcommittees, it should be approved retroactively by the Committee at its session during the same year.

- The election of chairmen of working groups established by the Committee and the two Subcommittees should be excluded from the above arrangements, and should follow the current practice.

Agenda Structures

- "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments on outer space" should be included as an item in the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee. The Legal Subcommittee should give consideration to the possible inclusion of new items on "Comparison of the norms of space law and those of international environmental law" and "Review of existing norms of international law applicable to space debris" and other items such as those listed in A/AC.105/639, paragraph 54.

- Any proposal for including additional items in the agendas of the Committee or its Subcommittees should be accompanied by a work plan, goals to be pursued and a time frame for consideration of the proposed items.

- Any additional item may be included on an agenda or any item already under consideration may be excluded from an agenda with the approval of the General Assembly.

Duration of Sessions

- Consensus agreement should be reached on the agenda structures before determining the alternative meeting pattern.

- The new meeting pattern should be 2 weeks each for the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee, in February and in March, respectively, and 1 ½ weeks for the Committee in June, with the total meeting time being 5 ½ weeks.

- The Committee may decide on an ad-hoc basis to extend or shorten the duration of a particular session whenever there is such need.

B. Members of the Bureaux

At the sixth and final meeting on 16 April 1997, it was also agreed that the composition of the Bureaux of the Committee for the first three year term starting with the current session should be the following:

Chairman:	Professor U.R. Rao (India)
First Vice-Chairman:	Ambassador Raimundo Gonzalez (Chile)
Second Vice-Chairman/Rapporteur:	Professor Mouslim Kabbaj (Morocco)

It was further agreed that for the first three year term starting in 1998, the Chairmen of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee should be the following:

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee:	Professor Dr. Dietrich Rex (Germany)
Legal Subcommittee:	Dr. Vaclav Mikulka (Czech Republic)

It was also agreed that the Chairman of the Committee for the second three year term starting in the year 2000 would be Ambassador Raimundo Gonzalez of Chile. The First Vice Chairman and Second Vice-Chairman/Rapporteur for the second term would be determined at that time through consultations between the Asian Group and the African Group. The Chairmanships of both Subcommittees would continue to be held for the second three year period starting in 2001, by the Western European and Others Group and the Eastern European Group.